

United States Army Dust Off crews of the Vietnam War, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions in Vietnam.

S. 2356

At the request of Mr. KING, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2356, a bill to amend the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 to require an electronic communication service provider that generates call detail records pursuant to an order under that Act to notify the Attorney General if the provider intends to retain such records for a period less than 18 months.

S. 2362

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2362, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide enhanced security measures for the Visa Waiver Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2372

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2372, a bill to require reporting of terrorist activities and the unlawful distribution of information relating to explosives, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 290

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 290, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that any protocol to, or other agreement regarding, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992, negotiated at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris will be considered a treaty requiring the advice and consent of the Senate.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. CARDIN):

S. 2422. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out certain major medical facility projects for which appropriations are being made for fiscal year 2016; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I speak today regarding the introduction of a bill, cosponsored by Senators BOXER and CARDIN, to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with the authority to obligate and expend appropriated funds in order to begin construction on critical projects in California, Kentucky, Maryland, and Washington. This is time-sensitive legislation, and I am working with my colleague and friend Chairman ISAKSON to move the bill by unanimous consent as soon as a final fiscal year 2016 funding measure is enacted.

Last month, the Senate passed the fiscal year 2016 Military Construction,

Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, which provided \$822,800,000 for major construction projects at these Veterans Affairs Medical Centers. This bill passed without a single vote cast against it.

However, the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot spend the money appropriated for fiscal year 2016 and begin construction on these projects because it lacks a separate authorization, which is required by law.

The legislation I am introducing today simply provides the authorization, as required by law, to allow the Department to move forward its fiscal year 2016 projects.

The fiscal year 2016 projects include critical, time-sensitive seismic safety corrections to structures in San Francisco, West Los Angeles, Long Beach, and American Lake. These buildings, which include health care facilities, veteran housing, and a community living center, are at an exceptionally high risk of collapse or suffering severe damage during an earthquake.

If a major earthquake struck in proximity to one of these medical centers while it was in use by veterans and the department's employees, there could be numerous injuries and deaths.

The U.S. Geological Survey estimates there is a greater than 99 percent chance that a magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquake will strike California in the next 30 years.

It is important to note that even less severe earthquakes can cause damage to seismically unsafe buildings that result in injuries and deaths. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services believes that the damage to seismically unfit buildings caused by the magnitude 6.0 earthquake that hit Napa, California on August 24, 2014, at 3:20 a.m., would likely have resulted in many more deaths and injuries if it had struck during business hours when these structures were in use. As it was, the earthquake caused over 200 injuries and one fatality.

In fact, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that a 6.0 magnitude earthquake hits California every 1.2 years on average. This is a terrifying figure, and it is why I strongly believe that Congress must enact this legislation without delay.

This is not a hypothetical situation. In 1971, the devastating San Fernando 6.6 magnitude earthquake struck and caused a total of 58 deaths. The older, deficient buildings at the San Fernando VA medical center were demolished, killing 30 patients and 10 staff. The destruction on the Federal Government's VA campus was responsible for the majority of all deaths reported in this earthquake. Had the Federal buildings been structurally sound, there is a likelihood that many of these deaths could have been prevented. If there are any Senators in this body who might want to delay moving the fiscal year 2016 construction authorizations, I urge them to think long and hard about this tragic event.

In 2015, Congress did not authorize the Department's major construction projects until this past September; 10 months after funds were appropriated by Congress in the fiscal year 2015 Omnibus. I believe it would be a huge disservice to our veterans to allow such a lengthy delay to occur again.

More hearings and delays are unnecessary to determine whether the Senate should pass this legislation. The Senate Appropriations Committee held hearings with the Department on these projects as it reviewed the President's fiscal year 2016 budget request. The Senate Committee marked up and reported the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill in a bipartisan fashion. The Senate voted in a unanimous fashion to pass this bill just last month.

I also understand there are concerns about the effectiveness of the Department's construction process, but the Senate's appropriations bill also included important provisions requiring the Department to work closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on improving the management controls for its next major construction projects.

I want to reiterate that without a separate authorization, the Department cannot start this vital work to protect our veterans and federal employees.

This is exactly why Americans believe that the Federal Government does not work. How does Congress explain this unnecessary delay to veterans who go to medical appointments in the buildings at risk of collapse or major damage? There is no reason to delay authorizing these projects when the money has already been appropriated.

I urge my colleagues to join me in quickly approving this legislation so that the fiscal year 2016 construction projects can move forward. Congress must act before the next earthquake strikes.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 338—CONGRATULATING TOWSON UNIVERSITY ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE UNIVERSITY

Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 338

Whereas, on January 15, 1866, Towson University, located in Towson, Maryland, celebrates the founding of the university on January 15, 1866;

Whereas Article VIII, section 1 of the Constitution of Maryland, adopted in convention in 1864, called for a uniform system of free public schools for the State of Maryland;

Whereas, in 1865, the General Assembly of Maryland (referred to in this preamble as the "General Assembly") created the State Normal School, which would become Towson University;